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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 002599

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN, WHA/OAS, G/IWI, S/WE

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SUBJECT: NICARAGUA: ZOILAMERICA NARVAEZ VOWS TO CONTINUE
FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Classified By: Amb. Trivelli for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Zoilamerica Narvaez, the stepdaughter of Nicaragua's president-elect Daniel Ortega and daughter of future first lady Rosario Murillo, remains committed in her quest to bring justice to the case of alleged sexual abuse by her stepfather during the 1980s, and of the failure of the Nicaraguan government to provide due process. She is exploring options for taking her case beyond the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), engaging with women's non-governmental organizations, and is working on a book with Fresno Pacific University in California. Narvaez believes that the lack of justice in her case has emboldened other sexual abusers and encouraged violence against women in Nicaraguan society to proceed with impunity. She also holds the view that Ortega, who lacks a clear mandate and will be pressured to deliver on his myriad campaign promises, will attempt to put on his best pro-democracy face to allay jitters by foreign investors, extend his honeymoon with the electorate, and deprive skeptics of ammunition to use against him. She predicts, however, that his return to a position of power will eventually lead him to abuse it. END SUMMARY

ELECTION RESULTS CAME AS NO SURPRISE

¶2. (C) Polcouns and poloff met with Zoilamerica Narvaez and her husband Alberto Araica on November 20 to discuss the results of the Nicaraguan election and her plans to continue her struggle to bring her case of years of sexual abuse by stepfather/president-elect Daniel Ortega to justice. Given the divisions among the anti-Ortega camp and the difficulties with the issuance of national/voter (cedulas) that prevented tens of thousands of people from going to the polls, Narvaez said she was certain two weeks before the November 5 election that Ortega would win and had resigned herself to this outcome.

THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

¶3. (C) Although proceeding with her case against the Nicaraguan government will be further complicated under an Ortega presidency, Narvaez asserted she is prepared to persevere. Zoilamerica expects that her mother, Rosario Murillo, will play an influential role in the Ortega presidency, echoing a common perception that she was the "real power" during the campaign and will continue to dominate Ortega. Narvaez was uncertain, however, of Murillo's popularity among the pro-Ortega camp, noting that

Murillo "has serious issues" with Bayardo Arce, Lenin Cerna, and vice president-elect Jaime Morales. She remarked that Murillo represents the FSLN's moderate, intellectual faction and International Affairs Secretary Samuel Santos is within her group.

BEST BEHAVIOR DURING HONEYMOON, BUT DRUNK WITH POWER

14. (C) Based on Narvaez's knowledge of Ortega's history and past behavior, she opined that he will likely begin his term playing by the rules and putting up a good front to silence skeptics, while going through the motions of hewing to his conciliatory peace and reconciliation rhetoric to maintain the support of his FSLN followers. She does not believe he will win over any converts. She thinks he may be able to extend his honeymoon to a year, but once it becomes apparent that he is unable to deliver on his unrealistic campaign promises, whatever support or goodwill he enjoys now will evaporate. Narvaez remarked that "power can act like a drug and aphrodisiac" and that Ortega will be unable to resist the temptation to abuse power for political and personal gain, including preying on other young adolescent females.

NO RECONCILIATION WITHOUT REDEMPTION

15. (SBU) Despite Narvaez's previous setbacks in moving her legal case forward in the Inter American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) -- now further complicated by Ortega's win and the challenge of gaining sufficient financial backing for legal expenses -- she intends to continue her pursuit of justice on multiple fronts. Narvaez firmly believes that backing down now would be tantamount to a victory for abusers and would embolden others to continue the cycle of violence against women. She still harbors hope that she will have a day in court to hold her stepfather accountable for his sexual crimes against her during her childhood and adolescent years. She mentioned efforts to bring her case to the United Nations, possibly the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

16. (C) Playing on Ortega's campaign slogan of peace and reconciliation, Narvaez has challenged him to repent and face justice, proclaiming there can be no reconciliation without redemption or justice. She shared her plans to confront Ortega on the subject at a Catholic mass. Narvaez also recounted how in a meeting with the Nicaraguan women's NGO Red de las Mujeres Contra la Violencia (Network of Women against Violence) just prior to the November 5 election, "A pardon should not be a condition to cover up crimes committed against women." Narvaez added that the Women's Network has offered to represent her in her case before the IACHR.

A VOICE FOR OTHER VICTIMS OF ABUSE

17. (C) Rather than remaining a silent victim, Narvaez is seeking to step up the work of her foundation "Sobrevivientes" (Survivors) to raise awareness of the problem of sexual abuse and violence and lack of justice in addressing it, as well as help others who are affected by domestic and sexual violence. A Mennonite herself, she was positive about her collaboration with the Mennonite-founded Fresno Pacific University in California which is sponsoring her to do research and write a book about her experiences. She believes the publicity surrounding the publication will help promote her cause. The book project will enable her to be eligible for a student visa, and she plans to spend time in California. She expressed gratitude toward the United States for supporting her case, specifically the efforts of Embassy Managua. Narvaez gave no indication that she has been threatened, noting that although she has been harassed in the past for speaking out against Ortega, she has not recently received any threats from FSLN members.

COMMENT

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18. (C) Narvaez has come a long way in her efforts to heal herself while continuing to seek justice for herself and other abuse victims. We can best help her by linking her to civil society groups and pro-bono lawyers who would be willing to assist her in her search for justice. Now that the opportunity to write a book has emerged, we believe she will in a better position to influence public opinion both in Nicaragua and abroad.

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